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### In Focus

This quarter was seminar time. In January, the Indian Musicological Society's (IMS) annual seminar titled "Some New Scientific Approaches to Music" was closely followed by ITC-Sangeet Research Academy's seminar titled "New Trends in Indian Music since Independence". It was time for the Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha's seminar on "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music" in March. Why are seminars needed at all in the field of performing arts? Isn't music to be heard and dance to be seen, and not debated on and discussed? One of our chief contributors A. Seshan answers this question in his report on the Shanmukhananda seminar thus: "(Seminars) help in clarifying issues and in enlightening the musicians and rasikas on matters of which they may not be fully informed". This seminar did indeed clarify issues regarding the use of western instruments in Carnatic music which has generated some controversy in music circles in recent times. We bring you reports on the IMS seminar and the Shanmukhananda seminar along with the papers presented by the participants in the Shanmukhananda seminar.

Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam and Rohini Venkatachalam, students of the late Shri S. Rajam pay tribute to their guru in separate articles. R. S. Jayalakshmi picks out references to musical traditions in the Tamil epic Silappadigaram in her article *Silappadigarathil Vattapaalai*. SUBAA IYER pens the diary of her pilgrimage to Tiruvaiyaru during the 163rd Tyagaraja aradhana in Jan 2010. S. Hariharan pays tribute to the great veena artiste R. Venkataraman, who passed away in tragic circumstances in January. Sabha Roundup and Happenings at the Vidyalyaya report on the events of the past quarter. Answers to the English crossword by Hema Veeramani are also presented.

□

### EAST MEETS WEST\* Shanmukhananda Seminar on "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music"

by A. Seshan



Seated from L to R Sai Subramaniam, E. R. Janardhan, V. S. Amarnath Sury, Dr. Sakuntala Narasimhan, P. Nagamani & Anil Srinivasan

#### The Debate

There has been a controversy on the suitability of Western instruments like piano, saxophone, etc., for use in Carnatic music. The main objection is that they do not capture the essence of our system – the microtones and the embellishment or

ornamentation of notes, called gamakas. Thus it is said that while Western music is linear ours is curvilinear. This is best illustrated in the case of veena that can capture the quintessence of all the gamakas through shakes, oscillations,

\*This is a slightly modified version of an article published in [www.narthaki.com](http://www.narthaki.com). Permission granted by the editor of the website for reproduction is thankfully acknowledged.

deflection of strings, etc., that is not possible in the case of many Western instruments. "Viriboni" in Bhairavi has all the ten gamakas in its composition, one of the several reasons for its highest rating among varnams. Is it possible to play it on, say, piano, in the same way as it could be done on the veena?

#### Harmonium and related Issues

Harmonium has been at the receiving end of criticism ever since an official in the then All India Radio (AIR) during the colonial period banned it on the ground that it was not capable of producing microtones. It had the distinction of being bashed by great men like Jawaharlal Nehru, Rabindranath Tagore and George Bernard Shaw! The AIR ban was lifted later after Independence and two eminent harmonium players, namely Appa Jalgaonkar and Tulsidas Borkar, received the Sangeet Natak Akademi award. It was an official recognition of the instrument as well as the artistes. Despite its limitation the instrument is preferred over sarangi by Hindustani musicians though their system is also known for gamakas. The case for gamakas and the objection to harmonium could be overstated. Unfortunately, its importance as a pedagogic instrument has not been recognised. In the first place, a student needs to have a firm grasp of the pure or plain notes (or "naturals", as they are called in Western music) before he graduates to ornamentation. The late musician and musicologist S. Rajam was among those who held this view. This is particularly important since our pitch is relative and not fixed as in the case of Western music. The singer has to be constantly alert and be

aware of his adhara sruti (basic pitch) in his singing for which he has the support of the drone instrument (tambura or the sruti box). And the ragas, or kritis, could vary in the extent to which they have the gamakas embedded in themselves. Thus we have Sankarabharanam and Kalyani with a large number of gamakas. Pallavi Gopala Iyer's *Needucharana* in Kalyani literally drips with all the gamakas of Kalyani. Can a harmonium do justice to this piece? The answer is obviously 'no'. On the other hand, we have ragas like Kathanakutuhalam which have plain notes. A competent harmonium artist can certainly play *Raghuvamsha Sudha* in that raga beautifully to the satisfaction of the audience. In fact one vainika has expressed a preference for this raga in teaching the first varnam to a student on the ground that it has plain notes.

The older generation will recall the concerts of Nadamuni Band attached to the court of the Mysore Maharajah. It had many Western instruments playing Carnatic melodies. The 78 rpm records cut by the Band were very popular in those days. Often they were featured in the 'Listeners' Requests' programme in the Southern stations of AIR. The question of the use of Western instruments is relevant to Bharatanatyam (BN) also. Recently there was a concert in Chennai where, besides Sikkil Gurucharan, a leading vocalist, Anil Srinivasan, an outstanding piano player, provided support at the performance of the Dhananjayans, a famous Bharata Natyam dancing couple. The Balasaraswati School believes in the philosophy that for a programme to be successful music should

be seen and dance heard. What does it mean? It means that all the sangatis, gamakas, brigas and other fine nuances of singing should be transmitted to, and get reflected in, the dance movements. (See <http://www.narthaki.com/info/rev09/rev791.html>) Thus the place of Western instruments needs to be studied in Bharata Natyam also.

#### Process of Adoption, Adaptation and Assimilation

##### Violin

The use of Western instruments in Carnatic music goes through the process of adoption, adaptation and assimilation. It is best illustrated by the case of violin. Some scholars consider it as a native instrument on the basis of the prototypes found in sculptures and say that it was called Ravanastram. Prof. P. Sambamoorthy points out that such sculptures of bowed instruments are found in the Agasteeswara temple in Tirumakudalu in T. Narsipur and Hale-Alur in Karnataka and in the Nataraja temple in Chidambaram in Tamil Nadu. According to him "the Kurma Vina of ancient India paved the way for the development of the modern violin. It may be noticed, that when the violin is placed upside down, it resembles roughly a tortoise with the head projecting upwards." (South Indian Music, Book IV). Veena was a generic term for many stringed instruments in the past like mridangam for percussion instruments. In his book *A Dictionary of South Indian Music and Musicians*, Vol. III, page 99, Prof. P. Sambamoorthy provides the earliest evidence of the violin as we know it today. It is seen in a mural on Tipu Sultan's Daria

Daulat summer palace in Srirangapatnam near Mysore. It shows a dance ensemble accompanying a female dancer with one of the artistes playing on the violin in a standing position. It is dated around 1784 AD. When violin first attracted the attention of Baluswami Dikshitar (1786-1858), brother of Muthuswami Dikshitar, it was considered an alien instrument. Probably the ancient bowed instrument found in sculptures had gone into disuse over the centuries and been forgotten by the people. Baluswami heard it in the European band attached to the Thanjavur court and was fascinated by its timbre. He learnt from a member of the band to play it. Muthuswami Dikshitar composed his nottu swaras in Sankarabharanam to help him in practising on the instrument. They were plain notes. Probably Dikshitar wanted his brother to master the plain notes before moving on to gamakas. Dikshitar preferred Sankarabharanam over Mayamalavagaulai, traditionally the first raga taught to a student. It is my guess that he might have been influenced by the fact that Sankarabharanam was close in structure to the major diatonic scale of Western music (C Major) played by the royal band. Baluswami Dikshitar and Vadivelu (1810-1845) of the Thanjavur Quartet popularised the new instrument by introducing them on the concert stage. Prof. Sambamoorthy refers to the evolution, over the years, of the jaru style of playing. The success of violin in the Carnatic system is no doubt due to its structure, tonal quality and ability to maintain continuity in music. And today no one thinks of it as an alien instrument. It is an inseparable part of our vocal concerts besides being a solo instrument. We have

seen Western masters like Yehudi Menuhin paying tributes to the virtuosity of our violin maestros. Thus the instrument has successfully gone through the process of adoption, adaptation and assimilation in our system. But it took several decades. Thanks to the progress in technology, communication and cultural exchanges between the East and the West the process is shortened now. One finds such exotic instruments as clarinet, saxophone, mandolin, guitar and piano being accepted by rasikas and popular in the concert circuit. The artistes have contributed to this outcome through their innovative ways to improve the suitability of the instruments to suit the idiom of our music through structural changes and in blowing, plucking and striking techniques. The structural changes have sought to enhance the volume, quality of timbre, harmonics, etc. of sound. The interesting point is that even traditional Indian instruments like gottuvadyam or chitra veena and santoor have gone through such changes in the hands of maestros.

#### Clarinet

Clarinet is another instrument of the West that has gone through the same stages as violin and has got absorbed in our system. Its compass of 3 octaves, keys enabling performance on any sruti and its tone colour enabled it to displace flute in the orchestra for dance programmes for a long time (Ibid.). Mahadeva Nattuvanar was the first to introduce it in chinna melam (sadir). Prof Sambamoorthy points out that "although it is graduated to the European tempered scale yet when a musician plays it he intuitively produces the scale of just

intonation by adjustments in blowing." (Ibid) However, the flute has come into its own again in Bharata Natyam programmes. The reason for the decline of clarinet on the dance stage is not known. However, it has gained wide acceptance as a solo instrument and the last word on its professional status was said when the Music Academy conferred the Sangita Kalanidhi title on its leading performer A. K. C. Natarajan in 2008.

#### Saxophone

At the conference on wind instruments held at the Chembur Fine Arts Society in Mumbai in 2000 Kadri Gopalnath explained the structural changes he had made to saxophone to adapt it to the requirements of our system. (See <http://www.carnatica.net/sangeet/saxophone1.htm>). Despite the substantial success achieved in his effort he said that some difficulties persisted. For instance, there was a problem in playing prati madhyamam and sadharana gandharam. Further, he had knowingly accepted a range reduction effectively, which he found was good enough for almost all kritis. Another feature was that he played generally on B-flat, which is a convenient key on the saxophone. All the salient features of the saxophone as well as the modifications made by him were demonstrated during the conference to show how the gamakas and other nuances peculiar to Carnatic music could be effectively produced. Now A. Kanyakumari provides accompaniment to saxophone played by Kadri.

Should the difficulty with prati madhyamam prevent the saxophone artiste from playing

ragas with that note? Not necessarily. At a lecture demonstration organised by Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha in a Carnatic music appreciation programme in 2002, Jayashri Aravind, a vainika and student of K. S. Narayanaswamy, demonstrated how the essence of Kalyani could be brought out without touching the prati madhyamam fret! Going back to the last century there was an episode involving Tiger Varadachariar and relating to the Experts' Discussion in the mornings at the Music Academy during the December music festival in Chennai (then called Madras). A heated discussion was going on about Begada. The point at issue was whether kakali nishada or kaisiki nishada should be used. The basic question related to the parent Melakarta raga. Was Begada a janya of Dheerasankarabharanam or Harikambhoji? The two opposing sides of equally eminent musicians were passionately arguing about the subject. Enter the Tiger. He enquired as to what was going on. He was informed of the contentious issue and was requested to give his views. He cleared his throat and just sang the raga without saying anything. In his brilliant rendition of Begada neither nishada featured! It settled the matter in a conclusive manner exposing the futility of such controversies in Carnatic music. (See "On Appreciating Carnatic Music", Shanmukha, July-October 2002).

#### Mandolin, Guitar and Piano

Mandolin's current status on stage in Carnatic music is due to the pioneering effort of U. Shrinivas in adapting the instrument to the requirements of the

system. There is no doubt that he has been tremendously successful. The ultimate accolade to him was paid by the late S. Balachander when he said in one felicitation function for the former that whereas sometimes one hears the complaint that some vainika played mandolin on his instrument he played veena on mandolin! The adaptation of mandolin, guitar and piano to Carnatic music was demonstrated by three eminent musicians, viz., P. Nagamani, Sai Subramaniyan and Anil Srinivasan, respectively, at a seminar in Mumbai on March 6, 2010, referred to later.

#### Keyboard

The Indian Musicological Society held a Seminar on "Some New Scientific Approaches to Music" on January 15, 2010 at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai. One of the presentations was made by P. S. Krishnamurthy, a multi-talented vidwan with a command over a number of instruments besides being a composer, on the 'Role of Electronic Instrument in Classical Music'. Using a Yamaha keyboard equipped with a device called 'bender' he showed how gamakas could be produced. With the help of three female singers he took the audience from sarali varisai (initial solfa exercises) through geetam, varnam (*Evari Bodhana* in Abhogi) and kritis *Vanchatonuna* (Karnaranjani) and *Endaro* (Sri). In particular, the rendering of Karnaranjani was superb. Due to the limitation of time he could give only glimpses through excerpts from the songs but he proved his point that the keyboard could be melodiously employed in Carnatic music with all its nuances. There is a child



prodigy who has been presenting innumerable Carnatic music concerts successfully on the keyboard for quite some time. He is the 15-year old K. Sathyanarayanan, who has also cut many albums that are popular. As in the case of other goods and services eventually it is the market that decides!

### The Seminar

Despite the general criticism that Western instruments are not good for the gamaka-oriented raga system of Carnatic Music they have become popular on the concert circuit in recent years. It was in the context of the controversy that Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts and Sangeetha Sabha, Mumbai, organised a seminar on March 6, 2010 on the "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music". The objective was to examine their adoption, adaptation and assimilation in Carnatic music to suit its idiom, the problems faced and the solutions sought. The idea was primarily educational and not entertainment. The following artistes participated in the seminar.

E. R. Janardhan – Saxophone

P. Nagamani – Mandolin

Anil Srinivasan – Piano

Sai Subramaniyan – Guitar

Dr. Sakuntala Narasimhan, a leading musician and musicologist in both Carnatic and Hindustani music, was the moderator. It was a unique event in the sense that it was the first of its kind bringing saxophone, mandolin, piano and guitar together on the stage for the purpose of lecture-demonstration to answer specific

questions.

The proceedings commenced with a mellifluous invocation by Kanakavalli Santhanam Chari, a student of the Vidyalaya. V. S. Amarnath Sury, Secretary of the Sabha, welcomed the gathering and introduced the artistes after explaining the purpose of the seminar. The keynote address was delivered by V. Shankar, the President of the Sabha, who traced the origin of our music system and described how it had absorbed the good elements from foreign sources over time. The speakers dealt with the following questions.

1. What was the genesis of the introduction of the instrument? Was there any specific episode triggering the interest of the pioneering artiste? What were the initial difficulties experienced? In the absence of teachers how did the artistes who first played the instrument do it?
2. Is the training process similar to what it is in respect of established instruments like veena (sarali varisai or solfa exercises, etc.) or is it different?
3. What are the differences in plucking, blowing or striking in order to distinguish between the swara (note) and the sahitya (text of the song)?
4. What are the problems in adapting the instrument to the idiom of Carnatic music? They would relate to such characteristics as the use of gamaka, karvai, etc. Are there specific gamakas that cannot be expressed? Any experimental attempts at enhancing the volume, quality of timbre, harmonics, etc., of sound?

5. Role as solo and accompanying instrument. The instruments under reference have been seen mostly as solo ones. Why is it so?

The above-mentioned points are covered in the papers prepared by the artistes. They are published elsewhere in this issue. The panellists explained, wherever appropriate, the changes they had made to their instruments to make them suitable to play Carnatic music. They also covered the nature of training which is broadly on the same lines as in the traditional syllabus (sarali varisai, etc). Further they explained the techniques employed for distinguishing swara from sahitya. Janardhan demonstrated the double tonguing (blowing) technique used for producing gamakas despite the instrument having keys. However, jaru cannot be as effectively produced as on the violin. It is also somewhat difficult to play misram and sankirnam. Nagamani said that as sruti is around one and one-and-a-half kattais the instrument could be used as an accompaniment only for those vocalists who have a similar pitch. The problem with higher pitches is that the tension of the strings would increase making it difficult to play. Its inability to sustain the sound and provide continuity is another reason for being not good as an accompaniment to vocal music. Initial training is in plain notes up to varnam. Once the student masters them gamakas are introduced all of which are possible with the caveat that kampita requires some special effort. Anil Srinivasan played on a digital piano. He made four points. Firstly, it is not used as a solo instrument as it cannot replace voice. It

could, however, be utilised to enhance vocal music by providing a harmonic framework. He demonstrated this with Sakuntala Narasimhan singing 'Sarojadalaneetri' in Sankarabharanam and a padam in Sahana. The audience appreciated the fact that Sakuntala could recall without any difficulty the padam learnt by her as a student from T. Brinda many decades ago and render it in the authentic tradition of the Dhanammal School. Secondly, in view of its popularity along with that of keyboard among the youth, the piano could be a way of attracting them to Carnatic music. Thirdly, it could provide percussive support to vocal music. Fourthly, it could be a good pedagogic device to introduce the student to plain notes. Sai Subramaniyan said that his training was similar to the traditional one but without gamakas. He could introduce gamakas like sphuritam, ravai, etc., only after he had started taking lessons from Kanyakumari. In her introductory remarks as well as in summing up, Sakuntala Narasimhan drew on her vast experience from both the Carnatic and the Hindustani systems to emphasise the need for a broad approach to the current experiments. She pointed out how some of the features like swaraprastara, pallavi, etc., were all introduced over a period of time during the evolution of the system. One view that emerged was the need for appreciating plain or straight notes also besides gamakas purely from the aesthetic point of view. There was absolute integrity in the presentations with each speaker describing what could be accomplished

Cont. on page 20

## LECTURE DEMONSTRATION ON SAXOPHONE<sup>1</sup>

by E. R. Janardhan



*I am Janardhan, disciple of Shri Kadri Gopalnath, I have been playing saxophone for the past 20 years and now I am here to demonstrate my learning and share my experience with you.*

### Part 1 - History of Saxophone

The history of the saxophone can be traced back over 150 years. It was invented by Mr. Adolph Sax in the year 1841. He was an expert instrument maker and talented musician as well. The saxophone was patented on March 20, 1846. It has since become a necessity in every band due to its tonal beauty and versatility. Adolph Sax, being a musician, was well aware of the tonal disparity between strings and winds: moreover, between the brasses and the woodwinds.

The strings were being over-powered by the winds and the woodwinds were being overblown by the brasses. Sax needed an instrument that would balance the three sections. His answer to the problem was a horn with the body of a brass instrument and the mouthpiece of a woodwind instrument. When he combined these two elements, the saxophone was born. The first saxophone-C bass, was displayed for

the first time, to the famous composer Mr. Hector Berlioz in 1841. He was amazed at its versatility, unique tone and control of dynamics.

In 1842, Adolph Sax moved to Paris to introduce his new instrument to the rest of the world. Soon to follow was the creation of an entire saxophone family: fourteen different saxophones in all.

Each differed by size and pitch. They were: E flat sopranino, F sopranino, B flat soprano, C soprano, E flat alto, F alto, B flat tenor, C tenor, E flat baritone, B flat bass, C bass, E flat contrabass and F contrabass. Many of these variations are seldom used or have become obsolete.

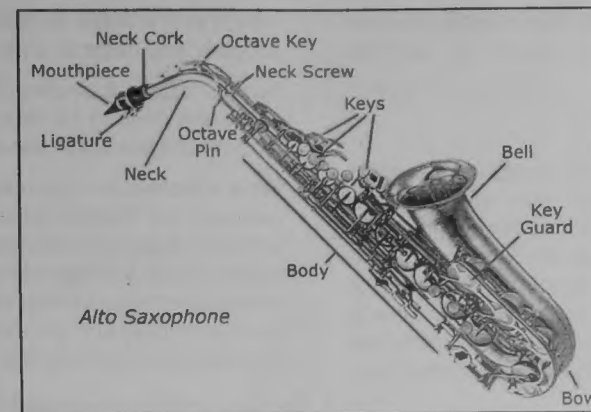
The saxophone finally became known as an integral part of all bands in 1845. It was officially introduced into the French Army Band and soon to all other bands.

Today, many people enjoy the wonderful music produced by the saxophone. It has become a part of almost every style of music. It is being played everywhere from night clubs to football fields. Saxophone is truly one of the great musical instruments in our existence.

### Part 2 - Parts of Saxophone

In the picture given below, all the parts of the saxophones are displayed.

The most important parts of the saxophone



are:

1. Mouthpiece
2. Reeds
3. Ligature

### Part 3 - Mouthpiece and Reed

The saxophone uses a single-reed mouthpiece similar to that of the clarinet. Most saxophonists use reeds made from *Arundo donax* cane, but since the 20th century some have also been made of fibreglass. Fibreglass reeds are more durable but are generally considered to produce an inferior tone. The saxophone mouthpiece is larger than that of the clarinet, has a wider inner chamber and lacks the cork-cover of a clarinet mouthpiece because the saxophone neck inserts into the mouthpiece whereas the clarinet mouthpiece is inserted into the barrel. The most important difference between a saxophone embouchure and a clarinet embouchure is that the saxophone mouthpiece should enter the mouth at a much lower or flatter angle than the clarinet.

The embouchure for clarinet must also be more firm than that of saxophone. The muscles in the lip and jaw will develop naturally with practice and the long tones exercise helps a great deal with this aspect of playing. Mouthpieces come in a wide variety of materials, including vulcanized rubber (sometimes called rod rubber or ebonite), plastic and metals such as bronze or surgical steel. Less common materials that have been used include wood, glass, crystal, porcelain and even bone-like clarinets. Saxophone uses a single reed. The reeds are proportioned slightly differently to clarinet reeds, being wider for the same length. Each size of the instrument (alto, tenor, etc.) uses a different size of reed. Reeds are commercially available in a vast array of brands, styles and strengths. Each player experiments with reeds of different strength (hardness) and material to find which strength and cut suit his or her mouthpiece, embouchure, tendencies and playing style.

Carnatic sax players use the 1, 1.5, 2, 2.5

<sup>1</sup>Prepared for Seminar on "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music" at Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, Mumbai, on March 6, 2010

and 3 strength reeds. The selection of reeds differs from the beginners to the professionals.

### Ligatures

The third of the alto saxophone parts is needed to attach the reed to the mouthpiece. This is the little clamp called the "ligature." Usually the ligature is made of thin metal, but sometimes it is made of rubberized fabric. The rubberized type is preferred for classical music, while the metal emphasizes the bright sound of jazz.

### Assembling the Sax

Actually, the saxophone is comprised of two major parts. These are the neck and the body. The neck is a removable metal tube. This tube attaches to the top of the saxophone's body and is covered with cork at the end. This allows the mouthpiece to slide into it.

Then there is the saxophone's body, which consists of a brass tube that is conically shaped. You will find a number of posts soldered into the body, or ribs attached to it. These support rods, keys and key cups that hold leather pads. The pads cover the holes on the body.

### Part 4 - Adapting Saxophone to Carnatic Music

There is no separate saxophone made for Carnatic music. We use the same Western saxophones with some minor alterations. The instrument is prepared for Western music and the key locations and actions are dedicated to it. To adapt to Carnatic music the following alterations are made:

1. Big leather padding without the

reflectors – It helps to cover the holes properly and helps to play gamakas.

2. Spring action – the reflex of the springs below the keys to be reduced so that smooth actions are achieved.

3. Tone adjustments – the main difference between the Western players and the Carnatic players is the tone. Western players look for high-dense material saxophone to produce darkish tones but Carnatic players go for the light saxophone to produce the divine tone.

The saxophone is a wonderful instrument and it has got its name and reputation in the Carnatic music field thanks to the dedication and practice put in by great maestros like Shri Kadri Gopalnath and others. Kids are attracted by the instrument and they want to take it up for practice. Because of the complexities and non-availability of proper teachers, their enthusiasm wanes after some time.

Saxophone is not different from other musical instruments for learning and practising Carnatic music. It is very much possible to play all the gamakas and ghana ragas of the system.

Despite the substantial success achieved in adapting the instrument to our system, we must put on record that some difficulties still persist. For instance, there is a problem while playing Prati Madhyama and Sadharana Gandhara. Further, I have knowingly accepted a range reduction effectively, which is found to be good enough for almost all kritis. Another feature is that we play generally on B-flat, which is a convenient key on the saxophone. □

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## MANDOLIN IN CARNATIC MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

by P. Nagamani



### GENESIS OF INSTRUMENT

Mandolin has its roots in the lutes of the ancient world. Throughout Europe, the mandolin goes by several different names including - mandolino (Italian), bandolim (Portuguese), bandolin or banjolim (Spanish). The Neapolitan mandolin, a smaller type having four pairs of strings, became popular in the 18th century and is used even today. The earlier mandolin, with five doubles was developed from the mandola, a 17th century lute. In short mandolin can be defined as a small stringed musical instrument of the lute family with a half pear-shaped body, a fretted neck, and a variable number of strings plucked with the fingers or with a plectrum.

### STRUCTURE OF INSTRUMENT

Normally one finds two variations in the original form of the mandolin.

1. The Acoustic Mandolin
2. The Electric Solid-Block Mandolin

The mandolin in its original form is typically an acoustic stringed instrument about 60cm (2ft) long with deeply-vaulted ribs and a table slanted downward at the lower end. It has a neck-cum-peghead attached to a hollow oval-shaped sound box. It has four pairs of loop-ended double rib fastened metal strings secured to hooks on the body at one end, and passed across a low bridge (on the sound box) and a nut (on the finger board) to the pegs inserted into a rectangular peg-box. A small flexible plectrum is used to vibrate the strings. A feature of mandolin playing is the constant reiteration of all long pitches, which counteracts its weak sustaining power.

### MODIFIED MANDOLIN FOR CARNATIC MUSIC

Since the Acoustic Mandolin is unsuitable for Carnatic music the electrically-modified Solid Block Mandolin is used for the sake of gamakas and the sustained notes. Here five-single-string mandolins are used and not double pairs of strings. Apart from these variations, the whole structure of the five-stringed mandolin remains the same as the ancient lute.

<sup>1</sup>Prepared for Seminar on "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music" at Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, Mumbai, on March 6, 2010

### TUNING OF INSTRUMENT

Since it's a Western instrument, the original tuning is E,A,D,G. For the purpose of Carnatic music, the mandolin is normally tuned to the notes corresponding to E, A, D, G and G (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th strings, respectively). In sum, this is the Sa, Pa, Sa and Pa, Sa (mandra sthayi) Carnatic tuning. In traditional tuning the sruti is one or one-and-a-half kattai.

### Initial Training and Training Process

#### Training

It is known that the pioneering artiste who brought mandolin from local bands to Carnatic music is none other than U. Shrinivas. He had his first lessons from his guru the late Sri R. Subbaraju, who was basically a vocalist. Sri R. Subbaraju introduced U. Shrinivas to the Carnatic music field and, after a gap of 6 years, he trained another player who has come to be known as Mandolin U. P. Raju.

The instrument is primarily Western to the core. It is absolutely inarticulate and challenging to explore the various techniques of adapting the instrument to the innate idiom of Carnatic music to produce gamakas, karvais, jaru, etc.

The late Sri R. Subbaraju used to sing and explain the note-to-note jarus or gamakas, which were produced on trial-and-error methods on the instrument. Later, these two artistes created their own distinct styles of playing Carnatic music. Therefore, it's a big deal to elucidate Carnatic music and its intricacies on this instrument in the absence

of a trained teacher, which is admirable.

The training process of Carnatic music in any field like vocal, veena, violin, mandolin, flute or guitar, for that matter, is almost similar. The lessons on mandolin start with the sarali varisai and builds up to various stages. A minor difference is that, at the basic level up to varnam, the lessons have only plain notes. The teaching of gamakas is post-basic.

### Playing Techniques

Playing techniques of mandolin are a combination of those on veena and violin as the plucking is done similar to veena on the right hand and the fingering is almost similar to that of a violin on the left hand.

In the process of training a student prior to the basic lessons, one teaches the left-hand and right-hand usage, positions of rightly holding the instrument, the fingering structure for various notes and, the plucking techniques. Therefore, while learning the basics, the trainee also gains control over the instrument, which makes him or her competent to start playing gamakas so as to avoid any hindrances to the fingers. One typically uses the index, middle and ring fingers of the left hand to alter the musical notes and the right hand to hold the plectrum for plucking the strings.

### Intricacies of Carnatic Music on Mandolin

The differences in plucking or striking in order to distinguish between the swaras



(notes) and the sahityam (text of the song) depend upon the nature of the instrument. The constant plucking produces the swaram patterns whereas the sahitya is produced by gamakas with lesser strokes. The strokes are given according to the lyric or sahitya enhanced with gamakas.

### Pros and Cons In Adapting the Instrument

Adapting the instrument to the idiom of Carnatic music went through various transitions.

One serious limitation that the instrument falls prey to is the lack of sustaining power. The instrument does not sustain a note which is crucial for Carnatic music. The enhancement and enrichment of the instrument to the solid block structure, sophisticated electrification, plucking or strokes at regular intervals and above all tremendous practice, helps to overcome the problem.

### Expression of Gamakas

Gamaka is one of the most beautiful aspects of Carnatic music. Only Carnatic music has gamakas which beautifies the swaras. This special aspect of gamakas provides the required life and bhava to ragas. They are important to create sancharas in raga alapana and the rendering of kalpana swaras. Gamakas constitute the grammar to combine swaras and when it is done, many wonderful phrases are created. With the help of the ten types of gamakas, the artiste is able to

create thousands of phrases with his imagination. These phrases combine together to form the alapana. When the same phrases are created according to the talam, they form the kalpana swaras.

There is possibly nothing that cannot be expressed on this instrument when explored and with hard work. Therefore all the essential elements of Carnatic music like the gamakas, jarus or karvais, kalpana swaras etc., can be produced. For example, if we take gamakas, there are dasavidha (10) types of gamakas as it goes like....

*AAROHAMAVAROHAMCHA DHALUSPHURITA KAMPITAH*

*AAHATA PRATYAHATASCHA TRIPUSCHAANDOLA MOORCHHANAH*....

In other words the ten types of gamakas are Arohanam, Avarohanam, Dhalu, Sphuritam, Kampitam, Ahatam, Pratyahatam, Tripuscha, Andolam and Moorchai or Moorchanai.

All these gamaka prayogas can be played on this instrument except for Kampitam which needs special efforts.

### Enhancement of the Instrument

Numerous attempts have been made for enhancing the quality of playing the instrument at various stages with the help of hi-fi technology. Different types of timbers like mahogany, French wood, maple and ash wood have been used to enrich the tonal quality. Basically, mandolin without

amplification does not have volume. Therefore guitar amplifiers which suit this instrument are used for better amplification, volume, harmonics, etc., of sound. Though all these aspects are acquired by the external devices, bringing out the essence, bhava, serenity, precision, subtlety and flavour lies undoubtedly in the artistry, eloquence and flair of the performing artiste.

### Solo Instrument

One of the frequently asked questions is why one finds mandolin as a solo instrument and not as an accompaniment on the stage. Initially it was introduced into Carnatic music as a solo instrument though Westerners have used it in orchestras. One of the essential and important elements of an accompanying instrument should be the continuous support to the main artiste. Due to the lack of sustaining power, mandolin cannot give effective support.

sruti is another main limitation which prevents this instrument from accompanying others. The mandolin sruti is one or one-and-a-half kattai. It can be raised to a maximum of two to three kattais, but raising the sruti from its original set-up increases the tension of the string which obstructs the effective display of the intensive side of gamakas and the tonal quality is also affected. Therefore, if one wants to have mandolin for accompaniment, he should also have the same sruti. For instance, if we are accompanying a veena, the tone is almost similar. If it accompanies a violin, the thick

sound of mandolin will dominate it. On the other hand, if we are accompanying a vocalist, the lack of sustaining power in mandolin does not support the voice throughout as a violin does. Thus certain technical difficulties have prevented mandolin from becoming an accompanying instrument. But mandolin as a solo instrument rules the roost and the proof lies in the superb results it has produced.

### Technology - Boon or Bane

Technical features favourable or unfavourable, special or specific, to mandolin depend on their kind. Since the instrument is electrified, it is obvious that it relies greatly on power, batteries, cables, pick-ups which are prone to scarcity, obsolescence or depreciation. Thus the technology is, in a sense, unfavourable. Certain technical items like the tuning keys, volume controls, pick-ups, wood, etc., are being imported for ensuring professionalism. The instrument is custom-made but professional makers are few. Not only mandolin players but also almost all the Carnatic musicians using Western instruments prefer foreign goods for their better quality.

To sum up, playing Carnatic music on mandolin has its own pros and cons. Emerging with stupendous success in terms of popularity with rasikas despite these obstacles and ongoing strict adherence to the classicism of Carnatic music is what is challenging.

## THE PIANO AND SOUTH INDIAN CLASSICAL MUSIC<sup>1</sup>

by Anil Srinivasan



appropriately.

But how does the piano adapt itself to the playing or accompaniment of, say, a Sahana or a Dwijavanti raga, and capture the subtler microtones and evoke distinct moods? While experiments in this domain have been attempted before, there has been little pedagogical or musical attention devoted to the serious adaptation of the instrument towards a more coherent role in South Indian classical music\*. Neither has the debate nor the controversy about what does or does not constitute the aesthetics of contemporary South Indian classical music been successfully resolved.

My talk will focus on two areas – an understanding of the larger concept of harmony and its proposed use in South Indian classical music, and its effects thereof; and the creation/development of new formats that enable a pianoforte instrument to be successfully used in this regard.

### Part I: Harmony and South Indian Classical Music

Once upon a time, going to a concert meant knowing what to expect. Classical music buffs were treated to a format that was more or less regularized and calibrated

across performers so much so it was merely a question of wondering what raga the day's artiste planned to delineate. There is an adage that the quality of the music is affected in a great measure by the quality of the listener, and with relatively less to choose from, the audience indeed developed a scale for high quality that artistes needed to measure up to.

If anything, the quality of sound reproduction has improved greatly and there is a surfeit of great ideas that are finding their way across the changing sands of the Chennai music scene. It has also meant effortful decision making for the listener who now has more complexity thrust up his aural cavities. In social psychology this is often referred to as the "paradox of choice", wherein more choice makes the listener less satisfied with whatever he/she chooses in the end.

In attempting to make some sense of the plethora of music choices available today, I saw three clear trends emerge. One, the movement towards great "vertical" scoring in music. In simple language, the addition of different types of instruments into the composition, a phenomenon that Ilayaraja pioneered and Rahman took all the way to the Oscars. The melody was still given its due (especially in the case of the former), but the sub-melodies, the cross-currents and the harmonic layers added to the texture made the experience all the more enhanced. So, one heard the African Congo play a nifty tango punctuated by a mridangam. A French accordion kept pace with the tabla in a heady, sinuous

arrangement before the singer took his lead. In the classical world, the idea of experimenting with harmony and integrating it into classical music has seen the burgeoning of several musicians. Stalwarts like Dr. L. Subramaniam, L. Shankar and U. Shrinivas, who went on to tour with John McLaughlin, the Shakti ensemble and Ravikiran with his "melharmony" are just a few of these examples. In recent times, the sound produced by the Madras String Quartet led by V. S. Narasimhan is also being classified under this new and emerging genre.

### Part II: Melody in the New Age

The second important development was the maturing of the "horizontal" score, i.e., the melody itself – growing in complexity requiring an understanding of nuances and influences. So, a piece which has a leitmotif consisting of a folk-ballad asks a question that is answered by a Western classical string section's answer. Counterpoint (a relationship between two or more voices that are independent in contour, but still sound harmonious when sung together) made its presence felt. Cross cultural influences abound – one can see gypsy folk music and desert tunes from Arabia sharing space with Carnatic music-based compositions and the lambada, all within sixty minutes of the same soundtrack.

In the classical world, the idea of counterpoint has long found its Indian counterpart in the "moorchana" style of singing, where male and female voice sing in their independent pitches and different ragas but still produce dormant harmony

\* Muthu and Mani (1931) on All India Radio, Wiedmann, Columbia University Press, 2007.

<sup>1</sup>Prepared for Seminar on "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music" at Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, Mumbai, on March 6, 2010

when sung together. Although not precisely falling within this description, the recent effort of Bombay Jayashree and T. M. Krishna is nevertheless a brilliant example of the expansion of the melodic line to incorporate two independent influences that vivify and colour each other.

### Part III: New Beginnings: The Piano and the Carnatic Voice

The last development is the coupling of both the earlier trends, i.e., the simultaneous expansion on both the horizontal and vertical axes. For example, the first two lines are sung in a traditional Carnatic style but the following musical

passage has a new motif that emerges from a different tradition (say, Western Classical) before both lines converge in an exciting harmonious third movement. The work of Aruna Sairam with the French musician, Dominique Vellard in the album "Sources" springs to mind in this connection. In my own experiments with the talented classical vocalist Sikkil Gurucharan I have found room to bring in the Western classical element composed specifically to intersperse with the sparingly-harmonized Carnatic voice. The result often finds empathy with a pan-Indian and/or a global audience that has not yet wholly attuned itself to the South Indian classical aesthetics.

cont. from page 9

within the grammar of the system while acknowledging the limitations. The seminar came to a close with a vote of thanks by Amarnath Sury.

One interesting element of the seminar was that the final session on panel discussion covered all the questions raised by the delegates. Thus it was an interactive session among the panellists and also between the delegates, on the one hand, and the panellists, on the other. Twenty five questions were raised and they were answered to the satisfaction of all the concerned persons. It helped in time management. Generally questions are allowed to be asked orally in seminars after each session. It becomes difficult and embarrassing for the moderator to exercise restraint on the questioner when he

engages in a long introduction before coming to the point. As a result, many do not get a chance to participate in the discussion. In the Shanmukhananda seminar, the delegates were advised to write down their queries on pieces of paper and drop them in the relevant box labelled "Mandolin", "Saxophone", "Guitar" and "Piano", for being dealt with in the last session. This arrangement worked well.

Seminars may not settle controversies decisively. But they do help in clarifying issues and in enlightening the musicians and rasikas on matters of which they may not be fully informed. The questions mentioned earlier will continue to be relevant in any future seminars on the subject conducted by other organisations.



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## CARNATIC MUSIC ON GUITAR<sup>1</sup>

by Sal Subramaniyan



### HISTORY AND ORIGIN

The modern word "GUITAR" was adopted into English from Spanish *guitarra*, German *gitarre*, French *guitare*, Arabic *qitara*, itself derived from the Latin *cithara*, which in turn came from the earlier Greek word *kithara*.

From the 19th century a guitar-like plucked instrument emerged. The guitar is descended from the Roman *cithara* brought by the Romans to Hispania around 40 AD. In the 14th and 15th centuries the qualifiers "moresca" and "latina" were dropped and these four-course instruments were simply called guitars. The Spanish *vihuela* or (in Italian) "*viola da mano*", a guitar-like instrument of the 15th and 16th centuries, is often considered a major influence in the development of the modern one. It was a six course lute-like instrument with a sharply-cut waist. It was also larger than the contemporary four course guitars. Meanwhile the five course baroque guitar, which was documented in Spain from the

middle of the 16th century, enjoyed popularity, especially in Spain, Italy and France from the late 16th century to the mid 18th century. Confusingly, in Portugal, the word *vihuela* referred to the guitar, whereas *guitarra* meant the "Portuguese guitar", a variety of *cittern*.

The instrument is an ancient and noble instrument, the history of which can be traced back to over 4000 years. Many theories have been advanced about its ancestry. The sole evidence for the *kithara* theory is the similarity between the greek word *kithara* and the Spanish *guitarra*.

### ANCESTORS

The earliest stringed instruments known to archaeologists are bowl harps and tamburs. The world's museums contain many such harps from the ancient Sumerian, Babylonian, and Egyptian civilizations. Around 2500-2000 CE more advanced harps, such as the opulently carved 11-stringed instrument with gold decoration found in Queen Shub-Ad's tomb, started to appear.

A tambur is defined as "a long-necked stringed instrument with a small egg or pear-shaped body, with an arched or round back, usually with a soundboard of wood and a long, straight neck". The tambur probably developed from the bowl harp as

the neck was straightened out to allow the strings to be pressed down to create more notes.

### THE GUITAR

Dr. Kasha defines a guitar as having "a long, fretted neck, flat wooden soundboard, ribs, and a flat back, most often with curved sides". The name "guitar" comes from the ancient Sanskrit word for string-"tar". Many stringed folk instruments exist in Central Asia to this day which have been used in almost unchanged form for several thousand years, as shown by archeological finds.

### FROM FOUR, TO FIVE, TO SIX-STRING GUITAR

The early instrument had more often four strings; then it converted to five and six strings. The standard tuning is E, B, G, D, A, E like the top five strings of the modern guitar. The sixth string was added in the 17th century and guitar makers all over Europe followed the trend. An incredibly ornate guitar by the German master from Hamburg, Joakim Thielke (1641-1719), was crafted in this way. At the beginning of the 19th century one could see the modern guitar beginning to take shape. Bodies were still fairly small and narrow-waisted.

The modern classical guitar took its present form when the Spanish maker Antonio Torres increased the size of the body, altered its proportions, and introduced the revolutionary fan top bracing pattern, around 1850. His design radically improved the volume, tone and projection of the

instrument, and very soon became the accepted construction standard. It has remained essentially unchanged, and unchallenged, to this day.

### STEEL-STRING AND ELECTRIC GUITARS

Steel strings first became widely available around 1900. Steel strings offered the promise of much louder guitars, but the increased tension was too much for the Torres-style fan-braced top. A beefed-up X-brace proved equal to the job, and quickly became the industry standard for the flat-top steel string guitar.

At the end of the 19th century Orville Gibson was building archtop guitars with oval sound holes. He made the steel-string guitar with a body constructed more like a cello, where the bridge exerts no torque on the top, only pressure straight down. This allows the top to vibrate more freely, and thus produce more volume. In the early 1920s designer Lloyd Loar joined Gibson, and refined the archtop jazz guitar into its familiar form with f-holes, floating bridge and cello-type tailpiece.

The electric guitar was born when pickups were added to Hawaiian and jazz guitars in the late 1920s, but met with little success before 1936, when Gibson introduced the ES150 model, which Charlie Christian made famous. With the advent of amplification it became possible to do away with soundbox altogether. Appleton constructed the very first solid-body guitar. Be that as it may, the solid body electric guitar was here to stay.

<sup>1</sup>Prepared for Seminar on "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music" at Sri Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha, Mumbai, on March 6, 2010



### Adaptation

To adapt guitar to Carnatic music I have made some alterations in the strings. Instead of six strings I have five for lower, middle and upper octaves with sa pa sa tuning. In the beginning it was difficult to make it in my own way but I got the guidance from my uncle Shri S.Balasubramaniam and particularly from Kum. Kanyakumari. I used only flat notes in the beginning but later my guru guided me in the usage of gamakas, jarus and brigas, which are essential for Carnatic music. She also taught me how to pluck the strings to differentiate between swaras and sahitya. Raga alapana and swara prastara were also taught by her.

### STRUCTURE AND POSTURE

As mentioned earlier, the original Western and classical guitar is a six-stringed instrument. For the convenience of Carnatic music it is changed to five strings and tuned with sa pa sa shruthi for lower, middle and upper octaves. Normal guitar has 24 frets but for Carnatic style it is only 22 (swarasthanams) with six keys for tuning.

In electric guitar there is good sound and clarity. The amplifier is used for monitoring. The posture of the artiste in Western classical music is one of standing but in

the Carnatic style it is by sitting on the floor and folding the legs.

### ADVANTAGE

Any raga in Carnatic music can be played on the guitar with jarus, gamakas, brigas, etc.

### DISADVANTAGE

A guitar is purely a solo instrument that cannot accompany another instrument in the Carnatic style, as it is a plucked instrument.

### ABOUT MY GURUS

My uncle S.Balasubramaniam first helped me to start the music lessons from swaravali, jantai, thaatu, alankaram, geetam, varnam and kritis. After sometime I joined Kum. Kanyakumari for advanced training. I learnt more techniques from her and she also gave me critical appraisals for my improvement. She helped me to cope with advanced varnams, kritis, pancharatna krithis, etc.

I am very proud to be a student of Kum. A. Kanyakumari. I am very thankful and happy to say that I have got such kind-hearted and helpful gurus in my music career.



## Report on Seminar of Indian Musicological Society SOME NEW SCIENTIFIC APPROACHES TO MUSIC

by A. Seshan

The Indian Musicological Society (IMS) held its annual seminar on January 15, 2010 at the National Centre for the Performing Arts, Mumbai. The theme was "Some New Scientific Approaches to Music". Shri Arvind Parikh, President of IMS, welcomed the gathering and outlined the scope of the seminar. Prof. Chandra Krishnamurthy, Vice-Chancellor, SNDT Women's University and Acting Vice-Chancellor, Mumbai University, inaugurated the event. This year's recipient of the Life-Time Achievement Award was the violin maestro Shri Lalgudi Jayaraman. His son G. J. R. Krishnan accepted the honour on his behalf from Ms. Marijke A van Drunen Littel, Consul General of the Netherlands Consulate in Mumbai, and Mr. Hans Wortelboer, Managing Director, Rabo India Finance Limited. The award was instituted by the Consulate General of the Netherlands a few years ago. The IMS has close collaboration with music institutions and musicologists in the Netherlands besides those in other countries studying the Indian system.

There were four sessions, as listed below:

### Session I

#### Indian Music: New Perspectives In Research

Moderator: Prof. Richard Widdess

Ms. Sumitra Ranganathan – Dhrupad banis as interpretive practice: performing pada in the Bettiah gharana

Ms. Sumathi Krishnan – The role of varnams in developing kalpana svarams

Ms. Jeanne Miramon-Bonhoure – Analysing a musical scale in improvisation: a comparative study of three bansuri performances

Ms. Chloe Zadeh – Thumri and speech: structural parallels

Ms. Sowmya Iyer – Effect of temperature on the overtones produced by a mridangam

Ms. Mrudula Joshi – Contribution of composers in experiments in Hindi film songs (1950-90)

### Session II

#### Presentation of Papers by Senior Researchers

Moderator: Prof. Wim van der Meer

Dr. Ashok Ranade – Sciences and Shastras

Prof. Richard Widdess – Cognition and Indian Music

Prof. Huib Schippers – Subject related to Sustainable Futures

### Session III

#### Presentations

Moderator: Shri K. Ganesh Kumar

Dr. Vidyadhar Oke – 22-Shruti Harmonium

Mr. Dharambir Singh – Technology-Enhanced Music Teaching and Learning

Dr. Govind Ketkar – Musical Notes Quotient and Ketkar Paddhati of Training

P. S. Krishnamurthy – Role of Electronic Instrument in Classical Music

#### Session IV – Concluding Session

All speakers/panellists participated including Prof. Frans de Ruiter, Prof. Joep Bor and Prof. Wim van der Meer

An innovation this year was the introduction of Session I giving an opportunity to scholars who could share their ideas on their ongoing research with the audience and gain by interaction. There was a poster session for those not accommodated in this Session. The posters are listed below.

Ms. Rajashri Sripathy – Teaching methodology for classical Carnatic music prescribed in Telugu texts belonging to the period 1850 to 1950 AD

Mr. P. K. Mittal – Existence of inverse relationships in raga scales of Hindustani music

Ms. Nimmi Gupta – The structure of the folk music-drama of Bhagat

Ms. Julien Jugand – Social changes in musical genres: chaiti, holi, kajli and 20th century Banaras

Ms. Pravina Manoharan – Fusion: the growing trend in Hindustani sitar music in Malaysia

Mr. Arnab Chatterjee – Dhrupad

compositions in rare talas

It is difficult to provide full coverage in this report to all the lecture-demonstrations due to the constraints of space. Only a few are highlighted without detracting in any way from the important contributions of those left out. Sumathi Krishnan spoke on kalpana svaras as a part of manodharma sangita or creativity and how varnams lay the foundation for them. The important point is that they should reflect raga bhava. She demonstrated the procedure followed by varying the speeds (kala), the length of avartas increasing progressively, the role of eduppu, end notes, korvais, makuta svarams, svara patterns like janta svaras, vadi-samvadi relationship and yati. The programme listed well-known musician Sowmya as Ms. Sowmya Iyer! It was a pleasant surprise to see her on the dais and hear her speak on her experiments. She is a product of IIT, Chennai, and using her scientific knowledge she is engaged in dealing with the problem of the variations in the sruti of mridangam caused by changes in temperature, especially when the percussionist travels. Although the instrument can be tuned to a specific pitch, tonality is affected by ambience. It can change by a semi-tone or so during the concert calling for retuning again and again. The skin and drum heads are responsible for the problem as they react to humidity. She explained her experiments in relation to the materials and their treatment to make them resistant to temperature changes. Ms Mridula Joshi gave an interesting account of the contributions of Hindi film music composers and their experimentations

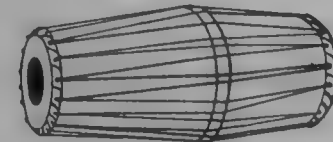
utilising different genres of music – classical, semi-classical, Rabindra Sangeet, qawwalis, ghazals, Western and other types of music. She analysed the structures of songs taken from various movies referring to the refrains, duets, etc. She sang well while giving illustrations of specific songs containing points of interest. She has a mellifluous voice so much so, at the end of her lec-dem, she was given an ovation after this writer mentioned how she sang like Lata Mangeshkar!

Dr. Ranade referred to various treatises right from Natya Sastra and made the point that while the sutras remained stable it is the commentaries that have changed from time to time. Musicians also make changes responding to contemporary realities. Often sastras recognise de facto changes and in that sense, they lag behind practice. In the new approaches to music tradition is considered a baggage. There are different categories of music like primitive, folk, tribal, religious, art and pop that have prevailed over two millennia. Music therapy and bio-musicology are emerging disciplines. Mass communication and computers make researchers restless looking out for fresh vistas. One should keep in mind that there are many roads to reach a goal.

Dr. Vidhyadhar Oke gave an interesting demonstration of his 22-shruti harmonium.

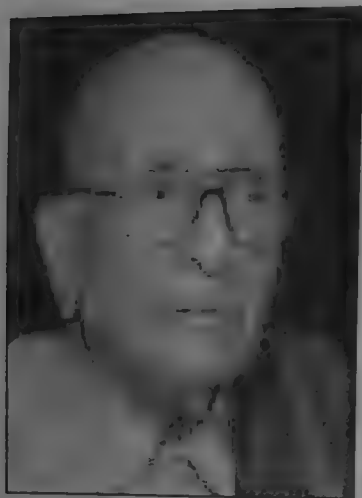
He referred to the different interpretations of shrutis. He gave a detailed explanation of the frequencies of different shrutis and their interrelationships. He referred to nature's frequency ratios. P. S. Krishnamurthy questioned the assumption that electronic instruments are not in tune with the needs of Carnatic music. His keyboard incorporates a bender that helps in producing shakes and oscillations that are the hallmarks of gamakas. Further details of his presentation are given in the article on the Shanmukhananda seminar on the "Use of Western Instruments in Carnatic Music", published elsewhere in this issue.

ITC-Sangeet Research Academy (SRA) arranges annual seminars in collaboration with the National Centre for the Performing Arts immediately after those of the Indian Musicological Society. This year the two-day event was held on January 16-17, 2010. The theme was "New Trends in Indian Music since Independence". SRA thoughtfully produces a complete and detailed report on the entire proceedings including lectures and comments, questions and answers during the interactive phases. The report on this year's seminar will be available at the time of the next one in 2011.



## GURU SMARANAM

by Rohini Venkatachalam



S. Rajam

Guru is one who dispels darkness. This has been my true experience under the tutelage of Shri S. Rajam. He opened up new vistas for me, in understanding music. Rajam Sir, as we used to address him fondly, was not only a musician; he was also a painter. He could visualise music to be as vast as the sky with every swara being a bright star in the mighty canvas. He treated every note with such purity that the raga bhava turned out to be pristine and impeccable. He never allowed dogma or tradition to colour his perception of what is good music. According to him, good music is that which is pleasant to the ears with perfect shruti alignment and proper tala - whatever be the style of music. Under him, my perception of music underwent a sea

change and I am indeed privileged for having had the opportunity.

### A karma yogi

"Karma yogi" is described in the 3rd chapter of the Bhagavad Gita as one who performs actions without expecting results. Rajam Sir was a perfect example of a karma yogi who used to work incessantly with great concentration for as many as 16 hours a day even when he was over 80 years of age, without expecting anything materialistic by way of reward. He was never over-awed by the honours and accolades that were showered on him as he began to attract attention with his divine music. He seemed to need very little sleep, toiling through the day and night. Daytime was devoted to teaching music, giving lectures, demonstrations and clarifying doubts of his students. The nights were meant for painting. He used to be engrossed in painting portraits right upto the wee hours of the morning. Rajam Sir was often referred to as a 'genius' in music circles and a musician's musician. Veterans used to refer to him as a combination of Beethoven and Michaelangelo. My mother used to look upon him as a descendant of the Vishwakarma (architect of gods) family. Such was the admiration of people for this great artist.

### Musical Genius

Rajam Sir was trained in music by the 'Greats' such as Ambi Dikshitar (grandson

of Muthuswami Dikshitar), Mylapore Gowri Amma, Papanasam Sivan to name a few. He learnt several kritis from the great Madurai Mani Iyer, who was also his relative. Rajam Sir was an admirer of Madurai Mani for his unswerving perfection in rendition, his commitment to excellence and his perfect alignment to shruti. Sir used to marvel at him and once exclaimed 'Even his breathing was attuned to shruti'. Little wonder that Madurai Mani Iyer is an all-time favourite amongst music lovers of all generations.

Rajam Sir has the distinction of singing ragam, tanam and pallavi in all the 72 melakarthis of Carnatic music and the same was broadcast by AIR, Chennai in a series. He was an authority in rendering the rare ragas and kritis of the Trinity and other Tamil composers. He was a specialist in rendering the kritis of Koteeswara Iyer and has the credit of publishing a book titled 'Kandaganamudam', containing all his compositions with notation. His delineation of "vivadi" ragas was a treat to the ears. In fact he was known as 'Shatshruti Rajam' in music circles. He served in the Expert Committee panel of the Music Academy for a number of years. His papers on different topics in music were the connoisseur's delight.

### Classic Painter

Rajam Sir had his formal training in painting from the School of Arts, Chennai and later blossomed into a creative artist by tireless pursuit. He studied the nuances of the art by living in the precincts of the 'Brihadeeshwarar temple' for 41 days and studying the sculptures and paintings that

adorn its walls. He used to paint pictures of deities and musical geniuses. He is the only artist to have created a portrait of the Trinity, a priceless gift for the younger generation. He has depicted the sapta swara devatas in painting form. His paintings have adorned prestigious music halls in Chennai and famous galleries in the United States, Canada and London.

### A dedicated teacher

He used to give the same attention to every student - whether a beginner or an advanced student. I have seen big musicians throng his house to seek clarifications on music, learn rare kritis, or learn painting. He used to treat everyone alike - whether a celebrity or a common person. He trained scores of students during his stint as visiting Professor of Music at the Madras University.

### Versatile interests

Rajam Sir loved pets. During his stay at Pallavaram, he had a cowshed with cows, one buffalo, a dog and a few cats. He used to personally tend to the animals and enjoyed every moment of doing so. He was also known to be an excellent cook, as endorsed by one of his neighbors, Kalanidhi mami (of abhinaya fame) at a public function. She also spoke of him as a caring parent who used to care for his children with great affection. He used to stitch his own clothes and paint his house neatly all by himself. He was a Gandhian in spirit and used to wear only khadi.

### Wide exposure

Stalwarts like Amir Khan used to visit his house in Nadu street. He used to fondly

reminisce about the Hamsadhwani sung by Khansaheb- his *Vatapi Ganapatim* with plain notes was a treat to the ears, he would say. During his long stint with the AIR, Chennai, as a Music Supervisor, he had come across a wide range of musicians, leading him to comment that the AIR was a seat of learning. He had learnt a lot during this period through his contact with musical giants like Tiger Varadachariar, Madurai Mani Iyer, Ariyakudi and Palghat Mani Iyer. He had great admiration for the singing of DK Pattammal - it was pure music, he would say.

He was all praise for the music of GNB and used to describe him as very creative. He rated Voleti very high for his musical insight and used to say that since Voleti was adept at Hindustani music, his handling of gamakas was very proportionate. He used to appreciate Hindustani music and always urged his students to emulate the plain note singing and adherence to shruti found in this form of music.

#### **Cherished Moments**

Once during his concert at Kanchi Matham, he was offered a lemon garland by the sage

of Kanchi. Rajam Sir always cherished this moment for he felt that God had blessed him in person.

He was once admitted to the ICU of a private hospital in Chennai for a respiratory problem. On visiting him, I felt quite upset to see the mass of tubes that were blocking his face. But he was unconcerned about his physical discomfiture and was keen on discussing my preparation for a concert that I had scheduled for the following day. He gave me several tips on performance and dwelt on the sequence of songs. The hospital nurse, who was passing by, watched us in bewilderment. Such was his passion and commitment to music that physical pain was no deterrent.

Words cannot adequately describe the greatness of this towering personality. His works of art and the recordings of his music stand testimony to his creativity and contribution. His music would also come alive through the renditions of his many students. I pray that such geniuses keep appearing on earth to serve as an inspiration to society.



## **RANDOM MUSINGS ON A RARE GEM – S. RAJAM**

by Nalini Dinesh



S. Rajam along with Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam

"The patterned lungi that he wore one day during class, would be hanging neatly as a curtain next day!", exclaimed Vijayalakshmi Subramaniam and we burst out laughing; in fact, the laughter set the tone for the rest of our conversation, as we spent a pleasant hour, talking about her late guru Shri S. Rajam, whom the Carnatic music field would miss sorely in days to come, as he was everyone's favourite resource person for music and classical paintings; and adding more colour to his personality, were his tailoring, masonry, cooking (he was known to have patted and fried vadas during one of his Cleveland sojourns) and sundry other skills. Vijayalakshmi goes on in a nostalgic vein, "My predominant memory of him is in profile, with that strong resemblance to S. Balachandrar sir, bent over his painting.

There were no fixed class timings, and he didn't even have a phone at home to fix timings – who would want to call me, at most there would only be students wanting to reschedule classes, was his refrain. He would just leave whatever he was doing at the moment and join his students for the class. When other students came in, they would just wait until the current group completed their session." This was in the mid-eighties, mind you! In many ways, the lifestyle of this avuncular gentleman seemed just as time-warped – from his ancestral Mylapore house in which he breathed his last, his simple dressing, his sixteen-hour work days, down to his optimal use of resources (he was known for his notes scribbled on the backs of envelopes which he used to send across to Sruti magazine.) The students ranged from people pursuing a Phd, performing artistes, youngsters to nine-yard sari-clad housewives!

As a musician, his focus was always on providing a learning experience for his listeners, which explains the rare ragas and kritis in his concerts and the large number of lecture-demonstrations that he painstakingly prepared for – learning new kritis and training his students on the same. So, unsavoury remarks on his music did not upset him. In fact, he expected them – he often used to remark that his job as music supervisor in All India Radio was a good thing to have happened to him and others – they could just switch off the radio if they didn't like what they heard!



Vijayalakshmi, who herself worked as an AIR programme executive for some time, remembers coming back to work after a day off, and hearing one of her colleagues praising Rajam sir's recording on the previous day thus "Why did you miss your guru's programme yesterday, the programme had such rare items, Todi and Mohanam....", so used had everyone become to hearing Shri Rajam singing vivaadi and other rare ragas!

S. Rajam's penchant for flat notes and his admiration for and friendship with Hindustani musicians is also well-known. On her guru's preference for balanced use of gamakas with appropriate usage of flat notes too, Vijayalakshmi recalls her guru saying, Hindustani musicians used to ask him why Carnatic musicians were so afraid of sadharana gandharam and kaishiki nishadam that they never sang them at their actual frequencies, they would always be oscillated at slightly higher or lower frequencies! The late Calcutta K.S. Krishnamurthy reportedly asked Rajam sir hesitantly before one of his AIR recordings, "Sir, today I'm singing Sahaana, can I put in a little gamakam"!

Using Muthaiah Bhagavatar's thesis *Kalpadrumam*, which describes characteristics of every musical note including colour and animal, his rich imagination and artistic skills helped in translating the imagery on canvas.

Vijayalakshmi talks about his emotional sensitivity that comes across in his beautiful painting of the Mahabharata scene wherein Karna (his favourite mythological character) and Duryodhana's wife are involved in a dice game and in the excitement of the game, her string of pearls break and are strewn all over, and yet Duryodhana who witnesses the scene, never once thinks amiss, such was his complete trust in his bosom friend. "Though art connoisseur I'm not, it is impossible to miss the beauty of the Indian woman he portrays in his painting of a day in the life of a rural Indian woman. I remember him admiring the weave of an Orissa handloom saree I wore to class one day!", Vijayalakshmi says. She further recalls his taste for good food and his humorous christening of her fledgeling attempt at badam halwa for Diwali, as "brown". "Ennamma, inda thadava, brown unda" was his jocular remark before the next Diwali.

His long and fruitful life seemed to decisively silence advocates of the evil effects of vivaadi dosha. Vijayalakshmi recalls going for class one day only to see her octogenarian guru with a fractured right arm in a sling, the result of his trying to chase away an errant cat, yet laboriously sketching with his left hand. The conversation dissolves into more laughter followed by reverential reflection on a life well-lived.

□

## 163rd TYAGARAJA ARADHANA FEST – A DIARY

by Subaa Iyer

### 2nd January, 2010

The 163rd Tyagaraja fest was flagged off at Tiruvaiyaru-birth place of saint Tyagaraja.

The events started with mangala vaadyam by S. Kasim and S. Babu at 5 p.m. followed by the Aradhana inauguration by Shri G. R. Mooppanaar and other MLAs of repute in the area. Aruna Sairam enthralled listeners with her soulful kritis in Kalyani and Kharaharapriya at the inaugural function. Following her, were the Malladi brothers Sriram Prasad and Ravikumar with their chaste Telugu diction. The inaugural day also staged an array of veena, flute and nagaswaram recitals. The programme went on till midnight.

### 3rd January 2010

The day started with a presentation by Tiruvaiyaru Tamil Nadu Government Music College students on the nagaswaram. The first part of the day was given to budding artistes in 10 minute slots. Masters B. Harish and B. Jagdish showed that their forte was rhythm in a Pantuvarali kriti. Bangalore Shivambigae Samamoorthy on the veena showed promise with good laya control of the two pieces that she played. Arabhi sounded a little different from usual rendition. More care should have been taken of the swara sthanams. R. Balaji and Chaitanya gave a scintillating performance on mandolin at noon. R. Balaji's Nalinakanti could have been a little slow-paced as this would have allowed the listeners to enjoy the nuances of the raga.

Mention must be made of Japan's Hitanori whose deft fingers on the kanjira gave perfect rhythmic support to the main artistes.

Front-ranking musicians who performed that evening were Jayanthi Kumaresh on the veena, Priya sisters (vocal) and N. Ravikiran on the chitraveena. At 9:30 p.m. the national programme began with Madurai G.S. Mani (vocal) followed by Ganesh and Kumaresh (violin duet). The 11:40 p.m to 12 a.m. slot had Puthur P. Haridas Dokra on the saxophone.

### 4th January 2010

As usual the day started at 9 am with nagaswaram till around 10:30 am. This was followed by a vocal recital of Mangalore Sruthi Subramanian and a mandolin recital by Prakash Hariharan. This day also had its share of flute, keyboard, guitar, veena, saxophone and many other instruments. T.M. Krishna, Kadri Gopalnath, Sudha Ragunathan and O.S. Arun were the stars of that night.

### 5th January 2010

This was the big day – the Aradhana day! The schedule started at 8:30 am with mangala isai followed by the rendition of the pancharatna kritis of Saint Tyagaraja. The pandal was filled to capacity, with listeners and devotees standing all around the mandapam, waiting eagerly, to get a glimpse of Saint Tyagaraja, as the abhishekam was performed. On the other

hand musicians and music lovers were rendering in chorus the pancharatnam. Dr Ramani on the flute, played the Bhairavi kriti *Chetulara* following which the vocalists sang in chorus with a sharp sense of shruthi and laya. The kala pramaana could have been a little slow. On that morning, an estimated crowd of 50,000 people were at the pandal. Music schools from all over the south had sent their students to render kritis on stage. In between the vocal and instrumental sections, there was half an hour of a lecture on Saint Tyagaraja by K. Sumathi. This event was an eye-opener to most of the rasikas and it was a welcome addition in this fest. The evening saw performances of S.Mahathi, Madurai T.N. Seshagopalan and Allepey Venkatesan. Mangalore K. Anantharaman's saxophone concert rounded off the evening.

#### 6th January 2010

As usual the day started with the nagaswaram recitals while violin, flute and vocal were interspersed throughout the day's programme. The evening's star was none other than Shri K. J. Yesudas. At midnight, the Anjaneya Utsavam took place with the traditional bhajana paddhati. More people could have attended and learnt about the paddhati if the utsavam had been held earlier in the day.

Some unique features of this fest are recorded below. All performers render only kritis and all performers immaterial of their standard, sing in a 10 minute slot, though some professionals do sing in a 15 or 20 minute slot. Every day throughout the fest, there was annadaanam for devotees who thronged the fest. While the aradhana is

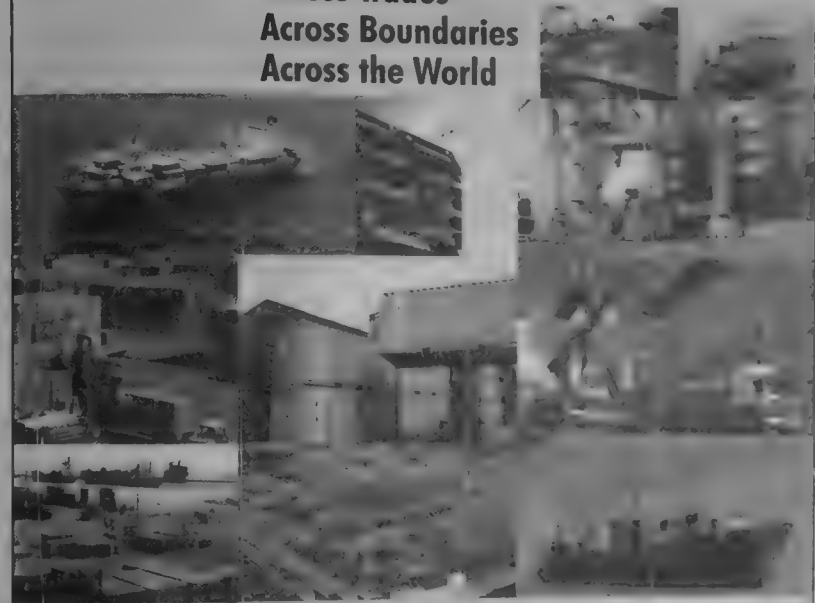
going on, shraddha is performed at Tirumanjanam street.

One Mr.Venkatraman of Chennai said he has been attending this fest for the past 17 years and arrangements at the venue were only improving over the years. Nevertheless he also opined that a lot more could be done. One Mannargudi music lover felt that classical music is dying and that Carnatic music isn't being taught properly because the tradition of music is dying. While the number of people in the music arena is increasing the quality is decreasing, opined the music lover. Another music lover from Nagapattinam thought otherwise, he said that the quality of music is still being preserved as top artistes are participating in this great event. The greatness of this event is that many young aspirants are able to perform on such a wonderful stage. Members of the ladies forum of Tiruvaiyaru say that it is a new experience every year. They further revealed that earlier it was 2 or 3 days of Utsava, while now it is somewhere close to 6 to 10 days. Every month, on panchami, a procession of Saint Tyagaraja is taken all over Tirumanjanam street and bhajans are held at the sanctum sanctorum. Panchanatheeshwara, the ruling deity of Tiruvaiyaaru, they opined, is more powerful than Lord Vishwanatha of Kashi and it is believed that Tiruvaiyaaru is dakshina Kashi. The ladies claim that once one has visited Tiruvaiyaaru one need not go to Kashi.

All of us, immaterial of whether we are music students or music lovers, must make it to this little hamlet of Tiruvaiyaaru on the banks of river Cauvery, at least once in our life time. □

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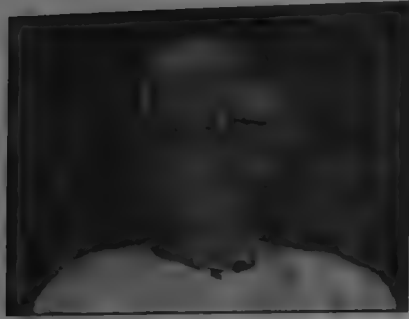
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## VEENA WAS A PASSION FOR R. VENKATARAMAN

by N. Hariharan



R. Venkataraman

The world of Carnatic music lost a dedicated teacher and performer of veena, the very ancient instrument loved by goddess Saraswathi, in the recent demise of the noted vidwan Trivandrum R. Venkataraman.

His death at age 72 was a shocking tragedy. He was going by car with veena-artist daughter Jayashree Raghupathy to Thiruvananthapuram from Chennai when his vehicle hit a culvert on National Highway at Ulundurpet and fell 40 feet down. Father and daughter left the world instantly, on January 5, 2010, leaving a mass of mourners behind. The mishap is all the more poignant when one remembers that only on January 1, 2010, the Madras Music Academy had awarded him the honour "Sangitha Kala Acharya".

Before his first guru Lakshmi G. Krishnan, now 87 could felicitate him, Venkataraman was called to his celestial abode by the great God. She is plunged in grief,

unconsolable.

Misfortunes never come single, they say. Venkataraman lost his devoted better half, Parvathi, on December 10, 2009. Her sudden death shattered him.

A retired deputy tahsildar of Kerala government, she managed her husband's schedule besides running the home. His passion for veena was such that bearing his grief calmly, he gave a brilliant concert at the Raga Sudha Hall, Chennai, on December 26, 2009, a fortnight after the bereavement.

That memorable performance, under the aegis of Nada Inbam, was his last. Yes, he lived for the veena, infusing life energy into the instrument.

Words are inadequate to recount the charms of Venkataraman's veena playing. He could bewitchingly bring home the beauty of the 'sahitya' he was playing, as his style was close to vocal music, a trait imparted to him by his distinguished guru Sangitha Kalanidhi K. S. Narayanaswami when he was a student at the Swati Tirunal Music Academy, Trivandrum. Venkataraman, born on August 31, 1938, at Cheran-mahadevi, Tirunelveli District, was initiated into music at the age of four by his father Ramasubba Sastri, a Sanskrit scholar with a good knowledge of Carnatic music. At the age of eight he started learning veena from Lakshmi G. Krishnan when Sastri had moved to Trivandrum to

take up a job as assistant at the manuscripts library there. Later he joined the Swati Tirunal Music Academy where he learnt vocal music from maestro Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer and Prof. C.S. Krishna Iyer. Veena he learnt directly from Prof. K. S. Narayanaswamy, the famed erudite vidwan who could play compositions with right stress on sahitya.

The devoted student passed out with high scores both in vocal and veena. He chose to pursue higher studies in veena and turn a professional. It bespeaks his high merit that he was selected for the post of Assistant Professor of Veena at the very college he had studied in. After teaching for some years, he moved out to join All India Radio, Trivandrum, as staff artiste. He retired from AIR in 1996. He used to do relentless "sadhakam" and evolved his style of playing close to that of the vocalist, innovating on his fingering technique focusing on aesthetics. He plucked the strings lesser times and softer to project the beauty of the subtle nuances of melodies. He was indeed a gifted musician with a high sense of the aesthetic. And he could please the connoisseur and the lay listener in equal measure. Yet concert engagements for him were few as he was

more fond of teaching. He had two daughters and one son who learnt music from him but took to other professions. They were both admirers and critics of his innovations.

Venkataraman teamed with N. Ramani on the flute and Lalgudi Jayaraman on the violin; the veena-venu-violin trio was well-appreciated in India and abroad. His name spread and he was a favourite of students from France and Australia. He was a frequent visitor to France as he had numerous students there. He can be deemed a cultural ambassador as he created an awareness in France of the charm of Carnatic music played on the veena as well as vocal. Venkataraman used to teach vocal music too to those who took it as second option. His students loved him and he with pleasure reciprocated as a father figure. He lauded the love for music among his students and their earnestness he rewarded by teaching with gusto. He knew he had to hone their talents and train them to be good performers. A dedicated teacher certainly he was. His memories will stay alive for generations to come. A great soul like him will inspire learners and performers for aeons.

□



## READERSPEAK . . .

My congratulations on the GNB issue. It is a very good issue with excellent articles. I liked A. Seshan's piece very much.

**P. P. Ramachandran**

★

The GNB issue looks good with lots of readable articles.

**Sakuntala Narasimhan**

★

Thank you for the good reviews and beautifully compiled interview (Shanmukha Oct-Dec2009). Congratulations.

**V. P. Dhananjayan**

The review (Thyagarasa, Shanmukha Oct-Dec 2009) is very nice and detailed .... you have a wonderful way of playing with words. It is very well written and thanks for the effort. It made me feel good.

**Shobana Bhalchandra**

The article (Musical Genius Illuminated, Shanmukha Jan-Mar 2009) was very well-written, it has come out so beautifully and makes reading very interesting and informative.

**Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi**

★

I am very much delighted to read the articles penned by personalities associated with the Birka Master GNB published in your issue October-December.

GNB was responsible for popularising the songs of Mayuram Vedanayagam Pillai, Mayuram Viswanatha Sastriar and Kavimani Desiyavinayagam Pillai. The songs thus popularised are, respectively, Karunalaya Nidhiye (Hindolam), Jayathi Jayathi Bharatha Matha (Kamas) and Nalla-sakhunam Nokki Chelladi (Shanmugapriya)

**N. Srinivasan**

Secretary, Indian Fine Arts Society,  
Chennai.

## WRITE TO US!

We would love to get to know you, dear reader, and hear your views, suggestions and thoughts on the journal or any topic related to the performing arts. Please email us at [bhamusic22@gmail.com](mailto:bhamusic22@gmail.com) or write in to us at :

**The Editor,**

**"Shanmukha",**

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## SABHA ROUNDUP

by Nalini Dinesh

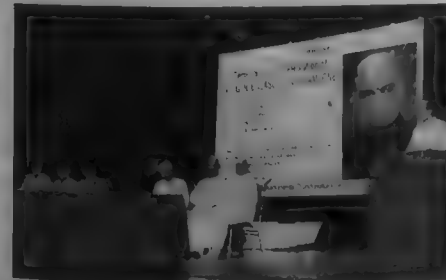


Abhishekam being performed for Saint Thyagaraja at Essar Hall, Bharatiya Complex.

### THYAGARAJA ARADHANA

by Nalini Dinesh

5th January was Bahula Panchami day, the day on which Saint Thyagaraja attained moksha. It was commemorated with an unchavritti led by Udayalur Shri Kalyanaraman, followed by rendering of Thyagaraja's Pancharatna kritis by students and staff of Vidyalaya at the Essar Hall. For the first time in the history of the Thyagaraja Aradhana celebrations at the Sabha, abhishekam was performed for the idol of Thyagaraja that morning. Rudrabhishekam was performed that evening during the



President Shri V. Shankar, speaking at G. N. Balasubramaniam's Centenary Function

grand group-rendering of Pancharatna kritis, by musicians of the Sabha and some of the sister institutions at the Sri Shanmukhananda Chandrasekarendra Saraswati Auditorium.

### G.N. BALASUBRAMANIAM CENTENARY

by Nalini Dinesh

GNB's centenary which fell on 6th January 2010 was celebrated on 9th January with a function in which the special invitees were his nearest kith and kin. To begin with, a documentary on GNB was screened along with a recording of his speech in Shanmukhananda Sabha. President V. Shankar's speech on the occasion traced his illustrious career thus: GNB had innate musical genius, and he further honed this by listening to musical giants of his time. He acknowledges in one of his writings that Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar was his manasika guru. He had devoted shishyas in whom he placed utmost trust, to the extent that his pradhana shishya, T.R. Balu was his purse holder and GNB was devastated when Balu died on one of his concert platforms. GNB travelled to Mumbai when Shanmukhananda invited him to felicitate him, even when he was bedridden. His career took on the added sheen of movie glamour when he acted in *Bhama Vijayam*, *Sati Anasuya* and *Shakuntalam* in the 1940s when his career was at its peak. He is said to be the first Carnatic musician to have paid income tax. GNB attained the feet of the Divine on the evening of 1st May after performing the shraddha of his father in the morning. GNB's greatest contribution



is his bani. Shri Shankar further stated that the Shanmukhananda Fine Arts & Sangeetha Sabha would be happy to create a music school of excellence in Chennai named after GNB. Following the president's speech, GNB's brother Shri G.N. Balakrishnan addressed the gathering. One of GNB's prominent disciples Trichur V. Ramachandran stated in his speech that there will never be another GNB, who entered the musical firmament like a meteor and now shines like a pole star. The function ended with a recording of *Radha Sametha Krishna* rendered by GNB.

The function was followed by a concert of mainly GNB compositions, rendered by Bhushany Kalyanaraman, who is the disciple of the late Tanjavur S. Kalyanaraman, one of GNB's disciples who went on to carve his own niche in the music field. Bhushany began with *Ambhoruha Paadame* a varnam in Ranjani raagam, followed by the popular Hamsadhwani kriti *Vara Vallabha Ramana* with kalpana swaram, *Kavalayella* in Saraswathi ragam and *Shri Chakraraaja Nilaye* in Shivashakti raagam. Her center-piece was Dikshitar's Kambhoji kriti in Misra Chaapu taalam, *Kailasanathena*, preceded by an alapana. Neraval was at *Charu Sarat Chandra* followed by kalpanaswaram. *Paramukhamela* in Kaanada, two ragamalika compositions *Kannanai Kaanbadeppo* and *Kettapozhudil* and a tillana in Jonpuri composed by Tanjavur S. Kalyanaraman rounded off the recital.

On 8th January 2010, leading violinist Kanyakumari gave a concert accompanied by Embar Kannan. She warmed up with the

Abhogi varnam, *Varavallabha* was the invocatory piece on this day too with swaras in two speeds. *Swaminatha Paripalaya* in Nattai added further pep before a Shuddha Saveri alapana for GNB's popular Tyagaraja kriti *Daarini* with kalpana swaram. *Janani Ninnu vina*, Subbaraya Shastri's Ritigowla kriti, the racy *Sobillu* in Jaganmohini with kalpanaswaram for charanam in breakneck speed, *Emani Pogadutura* in Veeravasantam and two kritis of GNB *Paramukha mela* (Kaanada raagam, with alapana) and *Samana rahite* (Sarangatarangini raagam) formed the rest of the concert fare.

### A SEDATE PERFORMANCE

by A.S.

The Friends of Chamber Music, Mumbai, organised a violin duet of the Lalgudi siblings - G.J.R. Krishnan and Vijayalakshmi - at the Shanmukhananda Smt Padma Ranga Chamber Music Hall on 31st January 2010 from 10 to 12 AM. The Sabha inaugurated chamber music concerts in a specially-constructed hall with natural acoustics (mikeless) a few months ago thanks to the munificent contribution from the family of the late Smt Padma Ranga, who had been a member of the institution and an avid rasika of Carnatic music. The air-conditioned auditorium can accommodate 125 persons. As far as this writer knows it is the only one of its kind in the city. At a time when one hears complaints about the loudness of amplification insisted on by performing artistes and the consequent discomfort to listeners the Sabha's initiative is laudable. Attendance is by invitation to rasikas known to be regulars at its concerts.



Lalgudi GJR Krishnan and Lalgudi Vijayalakshmi performing at the Sri Shanmukhananda Padma Ranga Chamber Music Hall

The duo being the children of the legendary Lalgudi Jayaraman, belong to the direct Tyagaraja shishya parampara and hence have authentic pathantara of the saint's kritis. Though young, they have been on the concert circuit, both in India and abroad, either accompanying their father or as soloists, for many years. Their popularity and the high expectation of rasikas were evident from the overflowing audience in the Hall with some sitting on the floor due to the lack of accommodation on the comfortable sofas.

A few general remarks could be made about the concert. The Lalgudi bani was articulated well. It has certain features. There is sahitya suddham (clarity in song) so much so that those who know the kriti can hear the words on the violin. There is no slurring over any word in matu for the sake of the aural effect. Sangatis are a forte of the style. One hears more sangatis than what one does in the music of other vidwans but they are related to raga and sahitya bhavas. But it is not excessive. It follows the principle laid down by Tyagaraja, viz., "Sarasa Sangati Sandarbhamu", in his Arabhi kriti *Nadasudharasambilanu* ("appropriate for the context"), the only reference to sangati in all his compositions. The mix of vallinam

(hard) and mellinam (soft) in bowing enhances the pleasure of the listener as against a monotonous continuity in the timbre of the instrument. Every song has its own natural tempo or speed. There are attempts by some musicians to either speed up or slow down depending on their predilections. The rasika's enjoyment of the music is optimal when the artiste's speed of rendition matches the natural flow of the kriti indicative of the intention of the vaggeyakara. The latter in turn is related to the bhava behind the song. This came to the mind when the artistes played "Mokshamu galada". They wisely eschewed any swaraprastara keeping in view the sombre mood of the song. In fact, the use of swaraprastara appropriately, and not for every kriti in a routine manner, is one of the features of the Lalgudi bani. There are, of course, others who do swaras even for swarajatis! The list of songs was indicative of planning. There was a good mix of shuddha and prati madhyamam ragas and adequate representation for important vaggeyakaras and different talas.

The two violins blended well enough to sound as one. The announcements of the kritis were helpful to the listeners. The sawal-jawab in swaraprastara between the two violinists was done in such a way that one did not just repeat or reproduce the other's notes but presented one's own improvised notes. Thus it brought out the individuality of the two artistes. The alapana in Purvikalyani by Vijayalakshmi was well done emphasising all the jeeva swaras. The piece de resistance that served as a proxy for a Ragam, Tanam and Pallavi (RTP) was Krishnan's alapana in Shankarabharanam, a trishthayi raga, followed by Subbarama Dikshitar's magnum opus *Shankaracharyam*. The song has a range from madhyamam

in mandara sthayi in pallavi to its counterpart in tara sthayi in anupallavi. Some ancient sangeeta shastras consider Shankarabharanam as the king of ragas. It provides scope for elaborate alapana and the articulation of many gamakas. A little carelessness in prayogas could, however, bring in Kalyani as an intruder, the difference between the two being only in madhyamam. With all the expertise that he has picked up over the years Krishnan did full justice not only to the contours but also the contents of the raga presenting it in all its pristine purity and majesty. One only wished that he had played a short tanam to make the rendition a good proxy for an RTP.

On a recap, the total experience could be described as sedate. Tranquillity and saukhyam (repose) prevailed throughout, a welcome change from the frenetic speed of some other artistes. There was no display of fireworks or flamboyance, the emphasis being on pure classicism, again a stamp of the Lalgudi bani. It was appropriate for the ambience in a chamber concert. The Pahadi tillana was the only one which sounded a little slow by itself and in comparison with the other songs. Probably the vaggeyakara conceived it that way. It is a Hindustani raga based on the folk songs of the mountainous regions made popular by Bade Ghulam Ali Khan and Bismillah Khan. It is generally limited to mandara and madhya sthayis. There are, of course, other vigorous tillanas of Lalgudi Jayaraman that are popular and one of them could have been presented instead.

R. Ramesh on mridangam and N. Radhakrishnan on Ghatam contributed in no small measure to the success of the concert. Their rhythmic accompaniment

and tani avartanam were subdued in keeping with the style of the violinists.

Tiruvalluvar says that when there is no food for the ear it is time for the stomach to have something to fill in. As the Sabha Secretary Amarnath Sury remarked rightly at the end of the programme there was adequate musical food served in the concert making it unnecessary for any meals. However, the Sabha arranged a sumptuous lunch as it does after every chamber music concert.

### SHRI SHANMUKHANANDA NATIONAL EMINENCE AWARD

by Jyothi Mohan

The Shri Shanmukhananda National Eminence Award was conferred upon the renowned, veteran vocalist, Sangeetha Kalanidhi Shri Nedunuri Krishnamurthy on the 6th of March 2010, at the Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi Auditorium. This award is given to eminent artistes who have excelled in the field of performing arts. It carries a citation, a cash award of Rs.1 lakh, a silver lamp and a bronze icon of Lord Shanmukha.

The evening commenced with Vedapatham followed by an invocation by Vimarshini Jayaram. On this occasion, the Sabha also wished to felicitate the new Governor of Maharashtra, Shri K. Shankaranarayanan. In his welcome address, the President of the Sabha, Shri V. Shankar spoke about Shri Nedunuri's illustrious career. He was saddened, he said, by the fact, that, though Shri Nedunuri had spent seven decades in the service of music, the government had not thought it fit to confer any award on him. The mark of a good teacher, he said, was when the shishyas rose to great heights. Shri



Nedunuri Krishnamurthy is bein citation of National Eminence Award by H. E. K. Shankaranarayanan, Governor of Maharashtra

Nedunuri has trained several worthy shishyas who have made their mark in the field of Carnatic music. Even now, he teaches most enthusiastically, he said. Every Indian has a right to score a century and we wish to celebrate his, when he reaches 100, he added.

Shri Shankar also traced the political career of the new Governor, His Excellency Shri K. Shankaranarayanan and hoped the state would flourish under his governorship. Temple honours for both, the Governor and Shri Nedunuri, were followed by felicitations by the Sabha and several sister institutions who turned up in large numbers, to greet the new Governor. The citation was read by the Hon. Secretary, Shri Amarnath Sury before it was presented to Shri Nedunuri along with the award.

Replying to the citation, Shri Nedunuri Krishnamurthy profusely thanked Shri V. Shankar, "I have no words to express my joy seeing his love for my music" he said. He paid tributes to his parents as well as his spiritual and sangeetha sadguru, Dr. Pinakapani. He has enjoyed a half-century

association with this august sabha, he declared. "After my first concert here in 1945, I have returned regularly, year after year to perform", he added. "I have been performing since the 'pandal' days, before this beautiful hall was built", he reminded us. "It gives me great happiness and pleasure to perform before this very erudite, dignified and appreciative audience, he said". He remembered the contribution made by the founders and early committee members - Shri R. S. Mani, Prof. T. V. Ramanujam, Shri Narayanaswamy, Shri Seshadri and others to take the Sabha to great heights. He reminisced that the late Shri Seshadri compared his music to that of Shri Semmanagudi Srinivasa Iyer, the first recipient of the National Eminence Award. "Semmanagudi has been my *manasika Guru*" he asserted. He felt he had received a Govt. award by having the rare honour of sharing the dais for receiving the felicitations, along with the Governor, Shri Shankaranarayanan. He concluded that he was indeed very happy to receive the National Eminence Award, given with such love and regard.

The Gov., His Excellency Shri Sankaranarayanan, was touched by the warmth of the reception he received from the Sabha as well as the various sister institutions. He paid rich compliments to the Sabha and stressed that music was a universal language. He wished the Sabha would grow from strength to strength.

Dr. V. Rangaraj, Vice President of the Sabha, proposed a vote of thanks. The award function was followed by a vocal recital by Smt. Sarada Subramanian, a disciple of Shri Nedunuri Krishnamurthy. □

## HAPPENINGS AT THE VIDYALAYA

by Nalini Dinesh

Lecture – Demonstration on Panchalinga kritis  
12th Jan 2010

Smt. Sumathi Krishnan, a disciple of Sangita Kalanidhi Smt. R. Vedavalli demonstrated the Panchalinga kritis of Muthuswami Dikshitar with lucid explanations for the benefit of Vidyalya students. Rohit Prasad provided mridangam accompaniment for the presentation.

### VAGGEYAKARA DAY CELEBRATIONS

SRI PURANDARADASAR & SRI TALLAPAKAM  
ANNAMACHARYA DAY 23rd Jan. 2010

Kousalya Raghunandan and Jyothi Mohan commenced their vocal recital rather tentatively with an Annamacharya composition in Mohanam *Ade choodare* describing the beautiful form of Lord Venkatesha, followed by a good rendition of a Purandaradasa kriti set to Bhairavi raagam, exhorting man to stop worrying about the material and instead spend life in contemplation of the lord. An interesting commentary by Purandaradasa, *Ikkalarada Kai Enjalu* on the excuses people give to avoid giving alms to the wandering mendicant tuned to Brindavani raagam followed. 2 more Purandaradasa kritis, *Bharati Deviye*, on Goddess Saraswati in Kharaharapriya ragam and *Taare Bindige* in Misra Tilang were followed up with an Annamacharya kriti *Navaneeta chora* in Jenjhooti raagam before concluding with a *ugabhoga* (which is like a shloka or *viruttam*) and a Purandaradasa kriti in Yamunakalyani raagam *Kadagola taranna*.

Certain pronunciation aspects like correct stresses on *la* in *Komala*, and *na* in *Narayana* would make for flawless *sahitya* rendition. Ending *sangatis* of kritis or sections of kritis need to be firmed up and clarity of *sangatis* improved upon (especially in kritis like *Navaneeta chora*). There was also an unnecessary stress on *madhyamam* in *Kharaharapriya* which is more suggestive of *Bhairavi*. The mridangist of the evening Narayanswamy Iyer alias Vinod Kumar missed out on good opportunities to bolster the recital, better observation of kritis rendered and alertness to *sangatis* would help in improving his percussion support.

The talented duo of Swathi and Sonia made a terrific start to their recital with excellent melding of their voices and an attractive *raagamalika* composition of Purandaradasa *Kamala Komala*. Alas, they weren't able to sustain the performance, mainly due to lack of clarity in *sangatis* and weak link-backs to the first raga *Ananda Bhairavi*, though Sonia was very emphatic in beginning every new *charanam* (in ragas *Hamsanandi*, *Kaapi*, *Baageshri* and *Sindhubhairavi*). The Kannada *gowla kriti* by Annamacharya had some dubious usages like *SGM...* though the *arohanam* of the raga prescribes *SRGM...* Sonia rendered the *Gopala Ratnam shloka* very well in *Revati* raagam with the Purandaradasa kriti *Yaadava Nee Baa* also well-rendered both by the vocalists and the violinist of the evening S. R. Ramachandra Sarma, who gave various touches to

enliven the rendition. *Deva Devam* of Annamacharya and *Kunithado Krishna* of Purandaradasa ended the recital.



Students of Jyothi Mohan performing on Vaggeyakara day

A dance repast awaited the audience as a fitting finale for celebrating these simple bards who evangelized such profundities with such beautiful lyrics. The power of the visual media in bringing to life the lyrics of unknown languages was strikingly evident in the evening's combination of vocal and dance recitals. The colour, movement and sheer pageantry of a dance performance would attract even the uninitiated. Jyothi Mohan's students Janhvi Gurav, Bhagyalakshmi S. Supriya Kamble, Heramb Ranade and Chaitali Arora from the Vidyalya and Nupur Pai, Aashita Ambekar, Apurva Rao and Sruthi Warriar from her own dance institution Sriranjani Kala Nilaya presented six items consisting of compositions of Purandaradasa, adapted to suit a dance presentation. A *raagamalika* composition on Shiva, *Chandrachooda* was the starting item, performed to a recording of Sudha Raghunathan. The dancers sporting smiling countenances were however sadly

out of step with the *talam*. *Mella Mellane* in Mohanam described the episode of gopis complaining to Yashoda about Krishna's tricks. Nupur Pai deserves special mention for her portrayal of Krishna. The recording had Shiva Prasad on the vocals with Ravi Anantaraman on violin and Shankaranarayanan on the mridangam. The audio kept fading in and out which took away from the effectiveness of the performance. *Bhagyada Lakshmi Baramma* had a good frieze of *Gajalakshmi* with the elephants on either side. *Azhuvudu Ettako* which depicted the gopis trying to alleviate the sorrow of a crying Krishna, and a *tillana* in *Sunadavinodini* again had footwork mismatched with the *talam*. The *Dashavatara mangalam* was the concluding item.

Jyothi Mohan anchored the evening's programme. Her brief description of each composition rendered or performed in the first vocal recital and in the dance presentation proved very useful for the audience.

Shyama Shastri and Subbaraya Shastri  
Day 6th Feb 2010

Lalitha Balan presented a vocal recital commencing with Shyama Shastri's *Kedaragowla kriti Parakela Nannu*. She did a brief *alapana* of *Varaali* followed by *Kaamaakshi*, *Himachala tanaya* in *Ananda Bhairavi*, a very good rendition of *Ninnu vinaaga* in *Poorvikalyani*, Subbaraya Shastri's *Begada kriti Shankari Neeve* and concluded with a good *Bhairavi alapana* preceding *Sari Evaramma*. Lalitha has a very good voice perfectly aligned to *shruti*.

A slight tendency to race could be curbed. Tejasvi Sundararajan, the violinist of the evening, played an odd phrase or two in his Bhairavi alapana like dpdn.



Chandana Bala Kalyan accompanied by Tejasvi S. on violin and Prasanna Kumar on Mrudangam

Chandana Bala Kalyan's recital was another very good effort. *Marivere* in Ananda Bhairavi, *Saroja dala Netri*, the Bhairavi swarajati *Amba Kamakshi* (the artiste pointed out that the word swarajati does not do justice to the composition since it is actually a maha maha kriti as stated by Prof. S.R. Janakiraman), a Saveri alapana followed by *Shankari Samkuru* and a Reetigowla alapana for Subbaraya Shastri's *Janani Ninnuvina* made up the fare presented. There was a shade of Anandabhairavi in the Reetigowla alapana.

Though the singing was excellent, the recital was still vaguely dissatisfying. This could be due to the neraval-like treatment that Chandana Bala employed for rendering the compositions. This would backfire, especially for such weighty and well-known and loved kritis.

Prasanna Kumar provided mridangam support and Dhanalakshmi Sundaram compered the programme.

**Patnam Subramanya Iyer, Poochi Sreenivasa Iyengar, Muthiah Bhagavathar, Mysore Vasudevachar and other contemporary composers' day**  
13th Mar 2010



Aditya Sreeram, Nithya Mani and C. Ramanathan accompanied by Vishwanath Ramaswamy (Mukund) on Violin and Aditya Rajagopalan on Mrudangam.

A trio recital by C. Ramanathan, Aditya Sreeram and Nithya Mani, students of Shanta Maheswaran, opened the evening's celebration. Muthiah Bhagavathar's *Ganapate* in Hamsadhwani was followed by a rare kriti of Mysore Vasudevachar in Jayantashree *Sridhara Pahi*. But the rendition seemed more like Hindolam with very little panchamam. Lataangi alapana by Ramanathan had too much oscillation on dhaivatam and rishabhham. *Aparadha mulan* was the kriti in Lataangi followed by two kritis with excellent pathantaram, Muthiah Bhagavathar's *Sarasadala Nayane* in Saramathi and Poochi Sreenivasa Iyengar's Kannada kriti *Paritaapamu*. There was a Kannada alapana too, which was a rather ambitious choice for a young learner since it is a challenge to bring out its swaroopa convincingly. The concluding item was *Mahadeva Shiva Shambho* in Revati by Tanjavur Sankara Iyer.



Siddhi Krishnamoorthy accompanied by Vishwanath Ramaswamy (Mukund) on violin and Aditya Rajagopalan on mridangam

Siddhi Krishnamoorthy, blessed with a good voice and a very good base, opened with Muthiah Bhagavathar's Mohanakalyani kriti *Siddhi Vinayakam*. A brief Bhairavi alapana for Patnam Subramanya Iyer's *Neepadamule* was followed by a Kannada kriti *Intakante* of the same composer. A good Poorvikalyani alapana preceded *Paramapavana Rama* of Poochi Sreenivasa Iyengar. The Hindolam alapana before *Mamavatu Shree Saraswati* was pleasant with light touches. The concluding kriti of Mysore Sadashiva Rao in Saaveri *Sri Kamakoti* was of sterling pathantaram.

Vishwanath Ramaswamy provided violin accompaniment while Aditya Rajagopalan handled percussion on the mridangam. Pranav Ganapati anchored the programme.

#### Talent Exposure Concert 19th Feb 2010

Praveena Goutaman, 6th year student of the Vidyalaya, presented a good veena recital. Starting with the Sahana varnam *Karunimpa*, she played the invocatory *Sri Ganesha* of Papanasam Sivan after giving a brief flash of Tilang. This was followed by

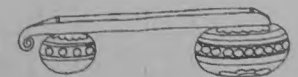
Dikshitar's Abhogi kriti *Srilakshmi Varaaham*. A good Pantuvaraali alapana and tanam was followed by Tyagaraja's *Shambho Mahadeva* with neraval and swaram. *Sarasa Sama Dana*, *Naadupai* and *Maitreem Bhajata* rounded off a satisfying recital. Praveena was accompanied on the mridangam by Rohit Prasad' who also accompanied the vocal recital of Govind Balakrishnan that followed.



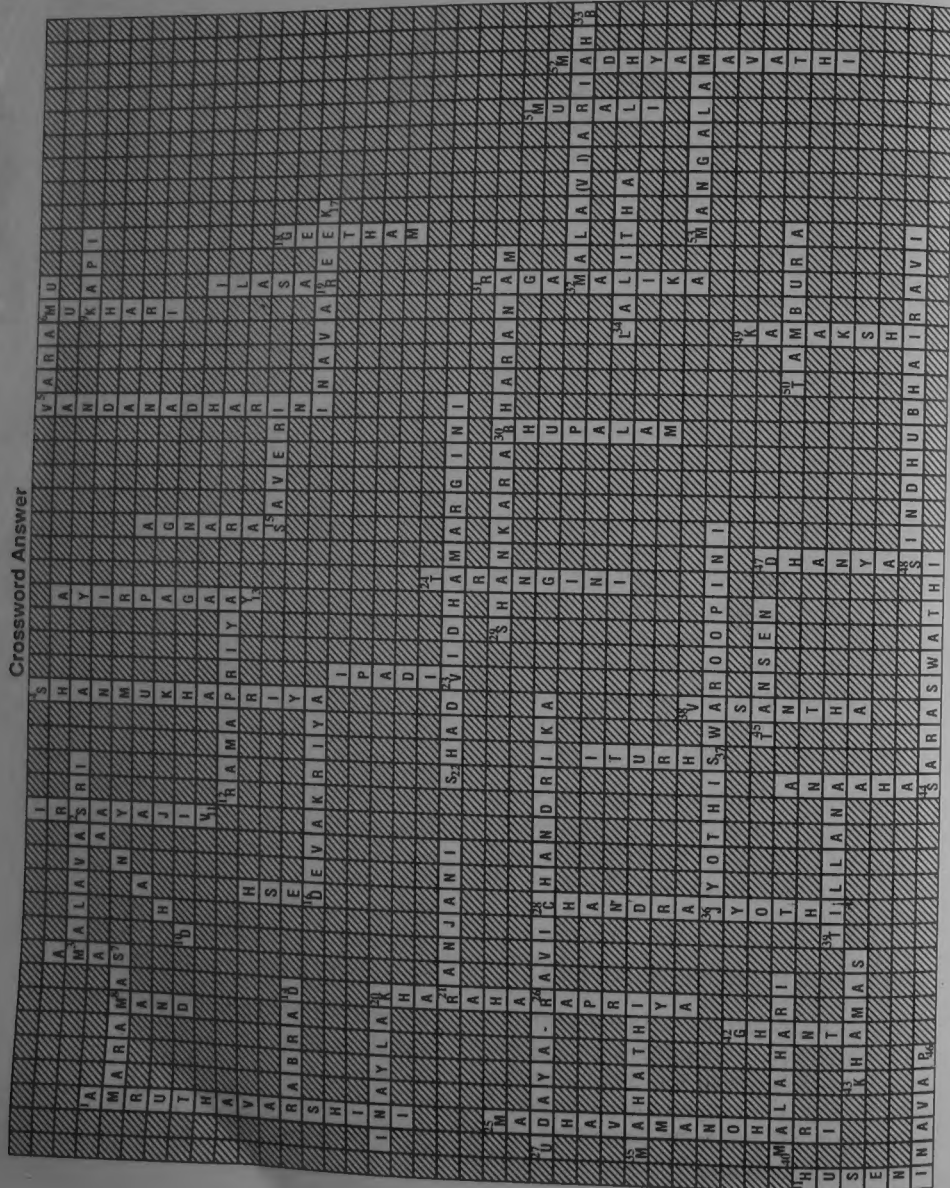
Vocal recital of Govind B accompanied by Vimarshini Jairam on violin and Rohit Prasad on mridangam

Govind gave a professional performance starting with the Kedaragowla varnam *Saami Dayajooda* followed by Patnam Subramanya Iyer's Vachaspati kriti *Ennadu Nee* with neraval and swaram at *Pannaga Shayana Parama Pavana*, an elaborate and seasoned Todi alapana followed by *Shree Krishnam Bhajamanasa* and concluding with an excellent rendition of Dharmapuri Subbarayar's Kaanada javali *Vanipondu*. Rohit played a very good tani avarthanam.

Vimarshini Jairam provided violin support for both artistes.







# **Sri Shanmukhananda**

FINE ARTS & SANGEETHA SABHA (REGD.)

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